

Chapter 13

Measuring Social Capital: The Case of the Technium Network in Wales

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ABSTRACT

This chapter will offer a unique insight to the existence of different forms of social capital at the Technium network. The exploration of the wider Technium network outcomes such as social capital is likely to be of benefit to private sector firms, innovation policymakers, and innovation program managers. As a result, this offers a distinctive insight to the desirable intangible facets of innovation policy. Arguably, activity at Technium centers contributes to less tangible objectives of creating virtuous circles of social capital. In particular, evidence of bridging social capital is exposed. The work helps to develop conceptual and theoretical foundations for identifying different forms of social capital. The chapter will offer a unique analysis of the Technium network. The analysis of technology policy via a measurement of resultant social capital has not been previously undertaken. As a result, this chapter offers a distinctive insight to some of the desirable intangible facets of technology policy.

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INTRODUCTION

Innovation policy has several different forms. The Technium Network may be said to be born of the form of innovation policy which focuses upon the fostering of science and technology based innovation. The Technium Network was initially designed to have a cynosure of supporting science and technology businesses. It was formed to identify, create and support productive links between higher education institutions, and science and technology start-up or early-years businesses. This chapter will offer a unique insight to the existence of different forms of social capital at the Technium network. The exploration of wider Technium network outcomes such as social capital is likely to be of benefit to private sector firms, innovation policy makers, and innovation programme managers. As a result this project offers a distinctive insight to the desirable intangible facets of innovation policy. Arguably, activity at Technium centres contributes to less tangible objectives of creating virtuous circles of social capital (Putnam et al., 1993; Fountain, 1998). In particular, evidence of bridging social capital (Landry et al., 2002; Woodhouse 2006; Kaasa, 2009) is exposed.

The research is of academic and practical significance, contributing to the body of understanding of the role of technology policy/programmes to support private sector technology based innovative activity. The work helps to develop conceptual and theoretical foundations for identifying different forms of social capital. This research project is based on empirical research into a technology policy initiative in Wales, where policy has been specifically focused on trying to improve the effectiveness of interactions between private sector technology strategies and public-sector technology policies.

The chapter will offer a unique analysis of the Technium network. The exploration of the wider network outcomes is likely to be of benefit to private sector firms, technology policy makers, and technology programme managers. The analysis of technology policy via a measurement of resultant social capital has not been previously undertaken. As a result this project offers a distinctive insight to the some of the desirable intangible facets of technology policy.

CONTEXT: THE TECHNIUM NETWORK

It was launched in 1999 and its first facility opened in 2001. The Technium has its roots in a partnership established between the Welsh Development Agency (now subsumed into the Welsh Assembly Government) and Swansea University. Initially funding to support the Technium was sourced from European Union Structural Funds, Swansea University, public sector grants and land from Swansea University. The origins of the Technium Network may be traced back to the notion of enhancing

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